Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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BERSERK GEN. CLARK KILLS MUSEUM PIECE

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Food Central

The world's two largest grain companies are now one. The wave of mergers that has changed the face of the American economy in Clinton time is also engulfing the food industry.. On July 9, 1999 Cargill Inc., the nation's largest privately held company, won approval from the Clinton administration to acquire the grain-trading operations of its primary rival, Continental Grain Inc. The approval came over the objections of attorney general offices from farm states, the Farmers Union, consumer and green groups, which charged that the union will create a near monopoly in the grain business. Combined, the two companies will control 94 per cent of the soybean and 53 per cent of the corn market. How can farmers get a fair price under these circumstances? Grain is not the only product where concentration is extreme. In the Midwest four companies control more than 40 per cent of the processing of each of the major farm commodities, lamb, beef, pork and chicken.

Approval of the Cargill-Continental merger does come with a few gossamer-like strings attached. Joel Klein, assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's antitrust division, said the full proposed acquisition would have eliminated an important competitor for the purchase of crops from U.S. farmers and other suppliers. Among the conditions of the acquisition, Cargill is:

- prohibited from acquiring an elevator in Missouri;
- required to enter a "throughput agreement" to make one-third of the capacity at its Havana, Ill., elevator available to an independent grain company;
- prohibited from acquiring a rail terminal facility at Salinas, Kansas;
- required to divest itself of four port elevators in Seattle, Texas, California and Chicago; of three river elevators in Illinois and one in Missouri; of one rail terminal in Ohio.

But these are minimal demands and Klein himself boasted at a field hearing on the farm crisis in Montana this summer that more consolidation in the food industry might be needed "in order to make American agriculture more competitive internationally". Klein naturally passed over the fact that NAFTA, GATT and other international treaties pressed by the big agribusiness firms and Clinton and Gore have done much to undermine the fragile balance sheets of independent farmers in the United States.

Take a look at the situation in the grain/soybean region in the Upper Midwest: western Minnesota, eastern North Dakota and eastern South Dakota. In this region, Continental Grain accounts for 50 percent of all soybean purchases and 30 percent of all corn purchases. Meanwhile, in the same region, Cargill accounts for 44 percent of all soybean purchases and 23 percent of all corn purchases. As noted above, combined they will control 94 percent of the soybean and 53 percent of the corn market.

According to the industry publication GrainNet, Cargill's swallowing of Continental Grain means that Cargill will now control more than 40 percent of all US corn exports, a third of all soybean exports and at least 20 percent of wheat exports. Cargill isn't done yet. Cargill executives say they want the corporation to continue doubling in size every five years. According to the Wall Street Journal, the purchase price of Continental Grain was only $1 billion. That means the company probably has another billion or so a year in profits to spend buying out other interests. Cargill could buy two operations the size of Continental's global grain operation with one year's earnings. That's leverage.

(**Food Central,** *continued on page 7*)

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Our Little Secrets

The Killers of Charles Horman

We remember as if it were yesterday the hysterical reception awarded Costa Gavras's 1982 film Missing, about the abduction and murder of freelance American journalist Charles Horman by Chilean security forces in the wake of the 1973 military coup against Allende. The movie and its star, Jack Lemmon, were subjected to poisonous abuse by the right, most notably the Wall Street Journal, for daring to suggest that the US embassy in Santiago might have been complicit in his death. Nathaniel Davis, ambassador at the time, was vitriolic in his indignation.

But on October 8, a few hours after a British magistrate ruled Pinochet could be extradited to Spain to stand trial on charges of torture and human rights offenses, an incriminating document surfaced amid the release by the US government of 1,100 records pertaining to the 1973 coup. This two-page document, written on August 25, 1976, by three officials in the State Department's office of Chilean affairs, states that "US intelligence may have played an unfortunate part in Horman's death". At best, the document — as described in an AP report of it — goes on, "the US intelligence community's role in Horman's death "was limited to providing or confirming information that helped motivate his murder by the government of Chile. At worst, US intelligence was aware the government of Chile saw Horman in a rather serious light and US officials did nothing to discourage the logical outcome of the government of Chile's paranoia." CounterPunch finds the State Department's best and worst interpretations baffling, with its best being (from the moral vantage point of any normal person) substantively worse, in that it suggests that US intelligence actually provided info (presumably intimations that Horman was a dangerous subversive) that prompted his murder.

Charles Horman's father Ed has always believed that the US government never charged the Pinochet regime with Horman's killing because any investigation would disclose its own sponsorship.

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Another Nixon Tape

October 5 saw another freshet of Nixoniana released by the National Archives, in the form of 445 tapes covering a seven-month period in 1971. Amid the usual foul-mouthed colloquies between Nixon and his senior staff came this observation on the war in Vietnam, in May 1971, from Henry Kissinger: "I suppose with so many of the lower-level people there and so many negroes, I'd be interested to see a break-down of the statistics of how many of those, percent, take heroin, how many percent of those are negroes. I bet it would show an enormously large number." Nixon's reply was unintelligible, but no doubt he nodded vigorous agreement. The late H.R. Haldeman recorded in a diary entry for 1969 that in the course of a conversation with Nixon on strategy for the war on drugs Nixon "emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to." The "key" turned out to be the 100-to-1 disproportion in sentencing for crack cocaine as opposed to powder cocaine offenses. The key being assembled jointly in 1986 by the Reagan White House and the House of Representatives at that time led by Democrat Tip O'Neill.

Nem. Con. on the Bomb

Here at CounterPunch we're great fans of The Catholic Worker. There's always wonderful stuff in it and the annual sub (25 cents for seven issues) is scarcely exacting. The August-September issue carried a fascinating article by Harvey Fireside, describing how, after being demobbed in 1957 after two years in the army, he still felt he had not paid his debt to a country that had saved his life in 1940, when he was a refugee from Hitler's Vienna. So he answered a recruiting ad and got a job at the Atomic Energy Commission:

"On our last day of training, we were posted to regular positions. My illusions were shattered. There was no 'Atoms for Peace' in my future. I was going to the Secretariat, which had a sinister Stalinist ring to it...[My boss] told me that I would join the Meetings Branch. In effect, I would become one of the glorified secretaries who took minutes at the weekly meetings of the five AEC commissioners. My cohort soon explained to me why we were needed. The chairman, a desk-bound admiral named Lewis Strauss, ran the agency with an iron hand. To placate congressional critics it had recently been decreed that AEC meetings would be conducted strictly by Roberts Rules of Order. Yet, I was totally confused when I sat in as an understudy at the next session of the five commissioners. Admiral Strauss had invited someone named General Starbird, a ramrod figure with four rows of ribbons on his chest, to present the case for augmenting the stockpile of H-bombs.

The US sponsors of Horman's death should stand trial just like Pinochet.

"Were there any questions? One of the other men around the table raised a cautionary quibble. Willard Libby, a chemist, responded to a nod from Admiral Strauss by saying there was nothing to worry about. End of discussion.

"How was this exchange going to appear in the official minutes? Jack, my mentor, showed me his draft: 'Following a report by the chairman of the Military Applications Branch, Commissioner Libby moved that the recommendations be adopted. After being debated, a motion to that effect was seconded by Commissioner Vance and passed unanimously.' That text was formally adopted the following week.

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It bore little resemblance to what I had witnessed, but it certainly lent a historical cachet to a magnum leap in the arms race."

Why not send the Catholic Worker a few dollars at 36 East First St, NYC, NY, 10003 which will buy you a sub and help a bit besides.

FROM SILICON VALLEY

Some good news, relayed to us by our friend Paul George, director of the Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, a lively operation based in Palo Alto, California. Paul reports that after months of campaigning by the Center, along with American Muslims for Global Peace, plus the Justice and Interfaith Peace Coalition, the supervisors of Santa Clara County recently voted, 3-0 with two abstentions to urge "lifting of sanctions against Iraq, to allow the rebuilding of Iraq's infrastructure and the free flow of humanitarian aid into Iraq without threat of prosecution". These are the elected local functionaries of Silicon Valley, so this was no small feat.

BUT JUST HOW PROGRESSIVE WAS HE?

The Nation ran a cover story in late August by Caleb Rossiter, titled "Think Globally, Run Locally: What I Learned Running for Congress as a Progressive". A public interest type in Washington, Rossiter described how he'd decided to run in upstate New York against a right-wing Republican congressman, Amory Houghton. Despite hard work and endless fundraising (which, we note from the computerised campaign records available from FEC Watch, did yield $1,000 from the editor of The Nation, Katrina vanden Heuvel) Rossiter crashed soundly to defeat, 68 per cent to 25 per cent. The point of the Nation story seemed to be, in Rossiter's words, that "any race is winnable and that progressives who are fed up with their representation should simply get out there and run".

But maybe Rossiter's problem was that he wasn't progressive enough. Joseph Wetmore, a CounterPuncher who lives in Ithaca, New York, tells us he finds the adjective "progressive", as applied to candidate Rossiter, puzzling: "I witnessed his campaign both on the radio and in person, and found it to be far from progressive. Examples of non progressive stands he took during the campaign are numerous: he felt that single payer health insurance

The Nation's "progressive" candidate, Caleb Rossiter, turns out not to have been progressive at all.

was far too radical an idea; the war on drugs was necessary, and that the Rockefeller drug laws were fair; he told a woman — who told a story about how the welfare system perpetuated poverty — that she, as most poor people, didn't know how to work the system; that the military budget only needed to be reduced by a small amount." In Wetmore's estimate "One of the reasons Caleb Rossiter lost is because he could not enlist the support of local progressives. He could not get this support because he would not support them. He was asked repeatedly to support the campaign to close the School of the Americas. He neither issued support statements nor attended any of their rallies; rallies that happened in the district, during the campaign. His campaign seemed to center round the theme: 'I'm not as bad as Amory Houghton', hardly the slogan of a progressive." Wetmore reports that Rossiter told him he's planning to try again in two years.

THE FINE PRINT

Interested in finding out just who from the military was on hand to assist in the immolation of the Branch Davidians at Waco? The Defense Department thought you might be, which is why they have snuck a helpful (to them) change in the law into the FY 2000 National Defense Authorization Act. Section 1044 of the Act, to be found on page 258 of the printed version, stipulates that henceforth "The Secretary of Defense...may, notwithstanding section 552 of title 5 (of the U.S. code) authorize to be withheld from disclosure to the public personally identifying information regarding (1) any member of the armed forces assigned to an overseas unit, a sensitive unit, or a routinely deployable unit; and (2) any employee of the Department of Defense or the Coast Guard whose duty station is with any such unit."

After various definitions of such "units" as those engaged in classified communications work etc, the new law adds that "The term 'sensitive unit' means...any other unit that is designated as a sensitive unit by the Secretary of Defense."

In other words, if military personnel can burn up a group of Americans or commit kindred mayhem while in breach of the law forbidding military units from being used in domestic law enforcement, the secretary of defense can deem them members of a "sensitive" unit, and the rest is secret.

RUSSIA FOR BEGINNERS

"With such a huge country conducting such a large-scale privatization everywhere, of course we made mistakes. We took [anti-corruption] measures, but maybe that wasn't enough." Thus spake former prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin in Washington last week. Moscow Times for October 2 had a good comment under the headline "Corruption Came About By Mistake?" "Yes, well, it happens. You are walking along, talking of your sincere desire to build a free and democratic society. Suddenly you stumble, catch yourself—and the next thing you know, you own an oil company! Oops! How embarrassing."

HISPANICS DON'T PLAY HOCKEY

Not so long ago a 1983 van in which were crammed fifteen Mexican tomato workers smashed into a tractor trailer in Fresno county, California, while transporting the laborers to the fields. Only two survived. This is known as an accident, albeit one aggravated by overcrowding and, so says the Highway Patrol, by the fact that the van didn't have proper seats or seatbelts and hadn't been certified for carrying farmworkers, a yearly requirement since 1997. But, once again and most cruelly in the case of immigrant workers, accident is only standard operating procedure at its most lethal. Across the country from where the tomato workers met their death, a friend in Guilford, Vermont, tells us that the state of Vermont's written test for a busdriver's license includes the following questions:

"What is the maximum number of folding chairs allowed in the aisle when transporting farmworkers: (a) 0; (b) 2; (c) 4; (d) 6; (e) 8? Answer: 8...What is the maximum number of folding chairs allowed in the aisle when transporting the school hockey team? Answer: 0."

So, by the calculations of the state of Vermont, eight (usually brown)

(**Our Little Secrets** *continued on page 5*)

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Where There's Grief There's Greed

Tony Coelho and the Smell of Death

From Texas comes another story raising yet more ethical questions about George W. Bush. At the heart of the scandal is the Houston-based Service Corporation International (SCI), which describes itself as "world's largest death care provider". As Gore's folk at the Democratic National Committee dish out this story to the press what they don't highlight and what the mainstream press has yet to disclose is that Al Gore's campaign chairman, Tony Coelho, sits on the board of SCI and serves as one of the company's strategic advisers.

The funeral industry has long been one of the least regulated and most corrupt enterprises in the United States. In Texas, mortuary operations are overseen by the Funeral Commission, an indulgent board appointed by the governor and largely composed of funeral home executives and their lawyers. In 1996 the Commission's director, Eliza May, began receiving complaints that SCI funeral homes were employing unlicensed embalmers, many of them low-paid Mexican immigrants. May launched an investigation of SCI, which disclosed numerous violations in embalming practices. May and her investigators recommended that SCI be fined $450,000.

One of the SCI-owned funeral homes May looked into was the Sparkman-Crane mortuary in Dallas. The commission had received complaints from the family of Frank Hood, a Wichita Falls television newscaster who died of cancer in 1998. According to Hood's family, the funeral home so overpumped Hood's body with embalming fluids that when he was presented in his casket for open viewing fluid was oozing from his eyes, ears and mouth. The sight caused his younger brother to run screaming in horror from the viewing room.

After the funeral, the casket was placed in the Hood family crypt. But when Hood's mother visited the site several weeks after the funeral she reported that there was a putrid odor in the crypt. The director of the SCI-owned cemetery said the smell must have come from "a dead mouse". A few days later, when members of Hood's family returned to place flowers at the tomb, they noticed that a brown fluid had seeped through the casket into a pool on the floor. The Hood family recently filed suit against SCI, claiming that the embalming of Hood's body was botched by inexperienced and unlicensed workers and that the casket was cheap and shoddily constructed.

Not long after May's investigators showed up for unannounced inspections of SCI funeral parlors, company executives were on the phone to their allies in Austin at the funeral commission, the governor's office and the state legislature. They accusing May of using "storm trooper tactics". May was put on the carpet. One of the funeral commission's members who lambasted her was Leo Metcalf, an SCI executive. Soon May was summoned to a meeting with Bush's chief of staff, Joe Allbaugh (now a top mananger in Bush's presidential campaign) and SCI's founder, Robert L. Waltrip. Waltrip is a family friend of the Bushes and has contributed $45,000 to George W.'s various campaigns.

During the meeting, George W. Bush popped into the office and asked Waltrip why he was there. Waltrip told the governor he was having problems with the funeral commission. Bush said, "Are those folks still messin' with you?" The governor turned to SCI's top lobbyist, a Republican lawyer named Johnnie B. Rogers, and said, "Hey, Johnnie B., are you taking care of him?" Rogers replied: "I'm doing my best, governor."

May was told to back off. But she refused to drop her probe. Nine months later May was fired and has now filed a whistleblower lawsuit against the Commission. As part of the suit, she subpoened Bush. In an effort to quash the subpoena, Bush filed a sworn affadavit on July 20, 1999 saying, "I have had no conversations with SCI officials, agents or representatives" or "with anyone on the funeral commission" concerning May's inquiry into SCI. But, quite aside from the encounter noted above, Bush had also taken up the issue at a political fundraiser, where he queried the head of the funeral commission about the SCI probe. So the governor appears to have lied under oath.

But this story has not yet gone very far and it's not likely to. Tony Coelho, who has served as a director of SCI since 1991, isn't about make SCI's shoddy practices and George W.'s efforts on the company's behalf much of a political issue. SCI has been exceptionally generous to Coelho. Last year, the former California congressman and House whip was paid $21,000 a year in director's fees and another $18,000 for serving on the executive committee. SCI also contributes $42,000 a year to Coelho's retirement fund and gave him 3,000 shares of stock valued at $135,000. Total annual compensation for attending 12 meetings: $176,000. Moreover, according to documents filed with the SEC, the company gave Coelho a loan for $418,922. According to Coelho's financial disclosure forms, he owns million shares of SCI stock worth $1.2 million.

In a 1993 survey, the Teamsters Union ranked Coelho as the nation's most over-rated corporate board member. The Teamsters based the rating on the number of boards Coelho sits on: AutoLend Group, Cyberonics, ICF Kaiser (the international construction firm), Intl. Thoroughbred Groups, ITT Educational Services and Pinacle Global Group. The union assumed that Coelho couldn't possibly devote enough time to each slot. But that calculation vastly underestimates Coelho's expertise as a political fixer, an invaluable commodity to companies like SCI which find themselves butting heads with regulators, trade agreements, class action suits and foreign governments.

Despite its size, SCI's operations in the US during the last few years haven't been as profitable as in the past. The company's annual 10-K filing with the SEC notes that SCI's financial problems in the States

When Hood was presented in his casket for open viewing fluid was oozing from his eyes, ears and mouth.

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are a result of "a weaker death rate" and "an increase in the number of cremations which typically carries lower sales price averages". But SCI forecasts better times ahead: "The increasing proportion of people over 65 in the Company's primary North American markets could increase demand for funeral services in the decades to come."

To compensate for the temporary downturn, SCI expanded its operations overseas, becoming the first global funeral company. Tony Coelho, according to company documents, has played a major role in charting the company's international strategy. SCI now has operations in more than 20 countries. While SCI controls about 11 percent of the US "funeral market", it has done much better overseas. The company's most recent annual report notes that SCI performs 14 percent of the funerals in the United Kingdom, 25 percent in Australia and 28 percent in France. In 1998, Coelho, of Portugese descent, helped the guide the company's entrance into Portugal, Spain and Argentina.

Coelho and his cohorts at SCI have worked their magic in France, where SCI does more than $524 million a year in business. Until last year French law gave local municipalities the authority to provide local moturaries with a monopoly on funeral services. SCI fought to have the law overturned as an unfair trade barrier. The company prevailed in 1998. France, SCI boasts, now has "an open market in funeral services". Still, there's more work for Coelho and company to do. In its latest quarterly filing with the SEC, SCI notes mournfully that "cemeteries in France, however, are and will continue to be controlled by municipalities and religious organizations, with third parties, such as SCI, providing cemetery merchandise such as markers and monuments".

SCI had sound reasons for targeting France. In the United Kingdom 70 percent of dispositions are through cremation. The French still opt for costly ceremonial funerals and extravagant interments. SCI filings crow gratefully that cremations account for only "17 percent of dispositions of human remains in France". That doesn't mean that SCI has given up on trying to coin money off of cremations. Company documents predict that "funeral operations which are predominantly cremation businesses typically have higher gross profit margin percentages than those exhibited at traditional funeral operations." SCI plans to expand its cremation operations in the US, saying it "believes that memorialization of cremated remains represents a source of revenue and margin growth."

A recent note from SCI to its shareholders attempted to calm concerns over the decline in SCI stock prices this summer, forecasting an increase in business with the arrival of autumn. "The death rate tends to be somewhat higher in the winter months and the Company's funeral service locations generally experience a higher volume of business during those months." **CP**

(**Our Little Secrets** *continued from page 3*)
farmworkers are worth one, always white, hockey jock.

BRAWLING FOR DOLLARS

A CounterPunch reader in South Korea tells us that brawling broke out on the floor of the Korean congress over the issue of whether to commit troops to the Australian-led UN force in East Timor. Korean military officers with reputations for brutality are often tapped to be factory managers at plants throughout Indonesia. Many Korean legislators argued that the troop deployment might alienate Indonesian elites whose indulgence is vital to the interests of Korean business leaders, particularly on the island of Java. Ultimately, under US pressure, the Korean congress approved sending a discreet contingent.

IF THE SHOE FITS

On September 27, Amnesty International USA bestowed its Media Spotlight award on Paul Fireman, whom the Boston Globe laconically described as "a local businessman". Actually, Fireman is CEO of the multi-billion dollar sweatshop conglomerate known as Reebok. The actress Susan Sarandon, a self-proclaimed radical, showed up to give the award to the tycoon. This is a neat trick for Reebok. The company surely deserves a public relations award of the highest order, though one for human rights hardly seems appropriate. After all, more than 90 percent of Reebok's shoes are made in dictatorships.

WEINER IN HEBRON

Geir Skogseth is a CounterPunch reader in Oslo, Norway. Aside from this estimable feature, he's an Arabist and accomplished translator. After reading our story on the attempt to smear Edward Said Geir wrote us to describe his own close encounter with Justus Weiner, Said's defamer.

"From January to November 1997 I was working with the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), from May to November as Chief Press and Information Officer. During summer that year, TIPH was contacted by Justus Weiner as he wanted to write an article on the juridical aspects of the operation. (The article was later published in an American law journal.)

"In meetings with representatives of our organisation, he approached two colleagues and myself—all arabists in our late 20s at the time—one by one asking us if we would consider an 'undercover research stay' in Cairo. He told us he needed an arabist to go to Cairo to do research on an article on the background of Edward Said, and that this would have to happen in secrecy (sic). In my case he asked several questions on whether I would be able to go to Cairo and pretend to do some other kind of research as a cover for what I would presumably be doing. When asked why he would not just go to Cairo himself, he said he expected problems at public libraries etc because he was American, whereas I would be less conspicious as a Scandinavian (I'm Norwegian, the two colleagues who were also approached are Norwegian and Swedish).

"I was the third one he got in touch with, after both my two colleagues turned him down. Needless to say, I did too. After brushing off the incident as one of the strangest 'job proposals' I have ever received I more or less forgot about the whole thing. However, seeing that Weiner's article has received wide distribution in the US, I wanted to come forward with my experience with Mr Weiner and his research methods."

This raises the question of who underwrote Weiner's three-year probe. Weiner has been claiming that he worked on his Said project for three years on his own tab, and that the Milken-financed institute in Jerusalem where he has been "scholar in residence" did not put up any money for his investigation. (Even though Weiner's letters to newspapers seeking information on Said's school always gave his full rank and address at the institute). Skogseth tells us, "He did not offer any money explicitly, but I got the clear impression that my costs would have been covered had I agreed to take him up on his offer". **CP**

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After the War on Serbia

Gen. Wesley Clark Fights On

At the beginning of the Kosovo conflict,CounterPunch delved into the military career of General Wesley Clark and discovered that his meteoric rise through the ranks derived from the successful manipulation of appearances: faking the results of combat exercises, greasing to superiors and other practices common to the general officer corps. We correctly predicted that the unspinnable realities of a real war would cause him to become unhinged. Given that Clark attempted to bomb the CNN bureau in Belgrade and ordered the British General Michael Jackson to engage Russian troops in combat at the end of the war, we feel events amply vindicated our forecast.

With the end of hostilities it has become clear even to Clark that most people, apart from some fanatical members of the war party in the White House and State Department, consider the general, as one Pentagon official puts it, "a horse's ass". Defense Secretary William Cohen is known to loathe him, and has seen to it that the Hammer of the Serbs will be relieved of the Nato command two months early.

Adding to this humiliation have been numerous post-war reports from the ground in Kosovo making it clear that the air campaign supervised by Clark inflicted little damage on the Serb army. Derisive comments from Serb generals on the general ineffectiveness of Nato's tactical air campaign have only rubbed salt in his wounds. Accordingly, on September 16, in a desperate effort to redeem the tarnished record of his military command, Clark summoned the Nato press corps in Brussels to hear his own version of events.

True to form, Clark's presentation opened with a gross distortion of the truth: "From the outset of this campaign, we said we would be attacking on two air lines of operation. There would be a strategic attack line" against Serb air defenses, headquarters, supply lines and a "tactical line of operation against the Serb forces in Kosovo and in southern Serbia".

In fact, neither Clark nor anyone else in the U.S. chain of command imagined that the war would involve more than a brief demonstration of Nato firepower in the forms of attacks on air defense radars, communications centers and other fixed targets, thus providing Milosevic with the excuse the U.S. thought he wanted to throw in his hand.

"The Joint Chiefs went along with [the war] on the strict understanding that it would last a maximum of two days", says one Pentagon official with direct knowledge of these events. "No one really planned for what to do after that."

One of Gen. Clark's claimed kills proved to be not a Serbian tank, but a defunct US military piece dating from World War II.

Clark intended the briefing to provide unassailable confirmation of his wartime claims that Nato pilots had destroyed hundreds of Serb tanks and other heavy weapons. Yet he had a problem, since the teams he dispatched to Kosovo immediately after the war could only find 26 tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces destroyed on the ground. Accordingly, Clark tried to dazzle his audience with military managerial techno-speak about the "building block methodology" employed in preparing his assessment, which permitted NATO's supreme commander to add another 67 "successful strikes" to the "catastrophic kills" represented by the 26 tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces he had already claimed.

With the sleight of hand of a true briefer, Clark left the impression in the minds of the press corps that in each of these 67 strikes the targets had actually been destroyed. But the "methodology" meant merely that the target was added to the score so long as two or more sources—i.e. the pilot's claim, plus perhaps video footage or a report from someone else in the area—indicated that the weapon had hit the target. With such casuistry, Clark was able to inflate the total figure to 93—not far from the wartime boast of 110 such kills.

Even the paltry claim of 26 destroyed targets in this category should be viewed with skepticism. An alert friend of CounterPunch in the defense community points out that slide # 27 in the briefing features a "tank" destroyed by a U.S. Navy F-14 mission. Actually, slide #27 shows not a tank but a second world war U.S. tank destroyer known as the M-36, famously ineffective even when introduced in 1943, and later donated to Yugoslavia some time in the 1950s. Perhaps, our friend suggests, "The Yugos took one look at what they got, and then put the things in front of the nearest VFW-equivalent meeting halls. Then, along come [the Nato attacks] and the word goes out: 'we need hulks to serve as decoys for the Americans to blow up.' Wes Clark & staff collect the imagery and proudly display their 'kill'".

This same observer notes that the Pentagon is working on what will be a "lying, cheating, thieving" after-action report, basing his description on news that the work is being supervised by deputy defense secretary John Hamre, a noted time-server and catspaw of the uniformed military.

Among the many issues the report is not expected to address is the sudden disappearance, half way through the conflict, of the $2 billion B-2 stealth bomber, described by Clark as one of the "heroes" of the war. Forty-three days into the conflict, the B-2 was reported as having flown "nearly fifty" sorties. When the war ended after 78 days of bombing, an authoritative report stated that the B-2 had flown a total of 49 missions, indicating that it "fell out of the war" half way through. Presumably, the costly behemoths were deteriorating at such a rate that the Air Force decided to relegate the plane to its alternative mis-

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sion as backdrop for President Clinton's demonstrations of martial resolve on TV.

Another topic on which we may expect Hamre to remain diplomatically silent is the ingenuity with which the Serbs diverted the anti-radar Harm missiles launched in enormous numbers by Nato's planes. Early on, the Serbs discovered that a microwave oven, adjusted to operate with the door open, appears exactly like an air defense radar to the $750,000 missiles — a very cost-effective exchange.

Despite such embarrassments, Clark can take heart from the fact that his influence on warfare already transcends the Balkans. Since Operation Allied Force laid waste to the Serbian civilian infrastructure, the targeting of such infrastructure has become routine and acceptable. The Israelis, who have for years shown relative care in avoiding the Lebanese infrastructure in their raids, were quick to change tactics, citing the Balkan operation as a legitimizing precedent. More recently the gangsters in the Kremlin have used the same justification for their terror-bombing of Chechnya.

Since Clark may be chagrined at his reception in post-war Washington, he should perhaps look to Tel Aviv and Moscow for a more fulsome recognition of his role in history. CP

Did Bribe Prompt Boris Doublecross?

Given the well attested military ineffectiveness of the Nato bombing campaign, the mystery remains: why did Slobodan Milosevic suddenly throw in his hand and cede control of Kosovo to Nato? The single most important factor determining the Serb cave-in was the betrayal by the Russians, who switched from supporting Slobo to pressuring him to give up.

Now, it is entirely possible that this turnabout was dictated by a legitimate desire to secure a further tranche of IMF cash for the Russian exchequer. However, given the swamp of corruption on which Yeltsin's rule subsists (belatedly "revealed" in the U.S. media in recent months) it is worth considering the possibility that Russian policy was turned on its head on the basis of the simple, old-fashioned expedient of a straight personal cash bribe to Boris himself.

Yeltsin can be bought. CounterPunch's confidence on this point stems from our knowledge of an episode at the United Nations just over five years ago.

In May, 1994, civil war broke out in Yemen. Southerners, who had led their own independent state in South Yemen from 1967 before merging with the north in 1990, were fighting to secede, an effort in which they were wholeheartedly supported and financed by Saudi Arabia. The Saudis have long cherished the aim of destabilizing Yemen and lose no chance to do so whenever opportunity presents itself.

By the end of May 1994, despite hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons and mercenaries supplied by the Saudis to the South, the Yemeni northerners had the southerners on the run. Desperate, the Saudis pushed for a UN Security Council resolution mandating a ceasefire, which by freezing the combatants' positions in place, would have legitimized the southern entity.

According to well informed sources in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a, Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, moved to New York and began writing checks. French intelligence later obtained a list of the recipients of Bandar's disbursements, together with the amounts. Top of the list, these Yemenis say, was Boris Yeltsin, the fortunate recipient of $60 million from Prince Bandar. On June 1, over the bitter objections of the government of Yemen, the resolution was passed by the Security Council, with Russia (which might have entertained doubts regarding support of secessionists in view of its troubles with Chechnya) voting in favor.

Since the Sana'a government ignored the UN injunction and pressed on to victory, Bandar's efforts were all for nought. But Boris Yeltsin, and others cognizant of the deal, may have marked the transaction as an instructive precedent. If Yemen was worth $60 million, what price the Balkans? **CP**

(**Food Central** *continued from page 1*)

Continental executives say they felt they had no alternative but to surrender to Cargill. They blame the rise of biotech alliances, such as Monsanto and Cargill and ADM and Novartis (the Swiss conglomerate that includes Sandoz and Ciba-Geigy). Paul Fribourg, CEO of Continental Grain says, "We couldn't stay competitive as a grain trader because our competitors were cashing in on the more profitable businesses of milling and crop biotechnology".

Grain is not the only product where concentration is extreme. In the Midwest three of every four sheep are slaughtered by ConAgra; Superior Packing; High Country; and Denver Lamb. Four of every five beef cattle are slaughtered by IBP; ConAgra; Cargill; and Farmland Beef. Three of every five hogs are slaughtered by Murphy Family Farms; Carroll's Foods; Continental Grain; and Smithland Foods. Six firms process half of the nation's chickens: Tyson Foods; Gold Kist; Perdue Farms; Pilgrim's Pride; ConAgra Poultry; and Continental Grain. 95 percent of American broiler chickens are sold under contracts to less than 40 firms. Nationally, 76 percent of the grain (corn, wheat and soybeans) is sold to four companies: Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, Continental Grain and Bunge.

"One often hears the statement that agriculture is changing and we must adapt to the changes", says William Heffernan, a professor of rural sociology at the University of Missouri. "Few persons who repeat the statement really understand the magnitude of the changes and the implications of them for agriculture and for the long-term sustainability of the food system. It is almost heresy to ask if these changes are what the people of our country really want or, if they are not what is desired, how we might redirect the change. These changes are the result of notoriously

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short-sighted market forces and not the result of public dialogue, the foundation of a democracy. Neither are the changes the result of some mystical figure or an 'invisible hand'."

Earlier this year the Farmers' Union hired Heffernan to undertake a study on consolidation in agricultural trade. Heffernan concluded that once you disentangle a web of subsidiaries, mergers, joint ventures, parternships, side agreements, marketing arrangements and alliances you find that "three food chains dominate the global food production system". These chains are: Cargill/Monsanto; ConAgra and Novartis/ADM. Even so, Heffernan notes that because of lax reporting requirements it's difficult to get a fix on precisely what these companies own and how they go about doing business. "Cargill has operations in 70 countries and it's a privately held firm. How do we get all of the necessary information? We've exposed the tip of the iceberg, but exposure only indicates the type of information needed to understand the global food system."

Heffernan points to the Cargill/Monsanto cluster as one of the most dangerous of the new alliances. In 1998 Monsanto and Cargill announced that Cargill had sold its vast seed operation to Monsanto (the world's leading biotech outfit) and entered into an agreement with the chemical company to develop new kinds of crop biotechnology. This alliance presents distinct benefits to both companies but dangers to consumers, farmers and the environment. A case in point is the alliances' so-called terminator gene. "No longer will Monsanto have to depend on access to farmers' fields for collection of tissue samples to make sure farmers do not keep seed from one year's crop to plant the following year", Heffernan warns. "Use of the terminator gene will mean that all crop farmers must return each year to obtain their seed from seed firms, just as corn producers have had to do for the past half-century."

Three corporate food chains dominate the global food production system.

If the press, which rarely mentions agricultural issues anymore, doesn't take this turn of events seriously, the corporate leaders of the agri-conglomerates certainly do. And they are not the least bit bashful about what's at stake. Dwayne Andreas is the politically wired former CEO of Archer Daniels Midland. He recently boasted to Reuters that he wanted to make ADM the world's dominant agriculture firm because, to his way of thinking, there's simply nothing more powerful than controlling the world's food supply. He said agribusiness is more powerful than the oil industry.

"The food business is far and away the most important business in the world," Andreas said. "Everything else is a luxury. Food is what you need to sustain life every day. Food is fuel. You can't run a tractor without fuel and you can't run a human being without it either. Food is the absolute beginning."

In response to the new corporate combines, the farmer cooperatives themselves are merging, creating an ever-narrowing vortex of concentration. On May 12 of this year, two of the nation's biggest farmer coops, Farmland Industries and Cenex Harvest States Cooperatives, announced their intention to marry. The new entity will be known as United Country Brands and will probably do more than $6.7 billion in revenues every year. United Country Brands will rank as the United States' third biggest grain company, behind only Cargill and Archer Daniels Midlands.

The CEO of Cenex said the union with Farmland was dictated by the growing might of Cargill. "Moving grain is expensive", Estenson told the Wall Street Journal. "We need to spread these costs over more bushels."

But the merging of the farmer coops spells doom for the small farmer in the end, as stranglehold economic policies take their toll. One estimate has the number of family farms falling from 300,000 to less than 25,000 by the year 2025. There's a real crisis brewing and no one is paying much heed. "Increasingly, our agriculturally based communities are looking like the mining communities of the old West," Heffernan concludes sadly. CP

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